
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 25, 2005

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Special Investigative Unit of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission Receives Council's 2004 Fishery Achievement Award



The Special Investigative Unit of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission received the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) 2004 Fisheries Achievement Award at the Council's meeting in Hampton, Virginia on January 19. The award was received by Colonel Steven Bowman (*on the left*), Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Law Enforcement on behalf of the Special Investigative Unit. With Colonel Bowman are Michelle Peabody, Vice Chair of the Council's Law Enforcement Committee, Robert Pride, Chair of the Council's Law Enforcement Committee, and Lt. Colonel Lewis Jones.

The Law Enforcement Committee solicits nominations for this award and recommends nominees to the Council based on guidance provided by the Council. The award is designed to recognize individuals and/or entities that exhibit outstanding professionalism, diligence, and effort to protect the living marine resources and/or fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic region through partnership, public education, and/or enforcement actions.

The Special Investigative Unit of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission was recognized for its efforts to protect living marine resources. More specifically, this award is in recognition of its detection and investigation of large-scale violations of marine fishery regulations in Virginia's tidal waters. The intelligence gathered during "OPERATION BACKDOOR" provided incriminating evidence regarding the sale of illegal fish and shellfish that resulted in the arrest of 14 individuals who were charged with 130 violations of Virginia's Marine Fisheries Laws and Regulations. As a result of this operation, all defendants were convicted. The defendants paid combined fines exceeding \$21,000, and were required to obtain proper licenses and permits to fully comply with state regulations. These highly visible enforcement actions provide a significant deterrent to those who may be considering violating federal and state fishery regulations.

The Council is currently seeking nominations for its 2005 Fishery Achievement Award. The Council will accept nominations for the 2005 awards through July 31, 2005. Anyone can submit a nomination and any person or organization can be nominated. Achievements nominated need not relate exclusively to enforcement activities. Other examples of protecting living marine resources include education, conservation, and public service. The Council will evaluate the nominations during its October Council meeting and present the award at its December or January meeting.

To receive a copy of the nomination form, visit the Council's website at: www.mafmc.org. Printed copies of the nomination forms are available by contacting Debbie Donangelo at 302.674.2331 x 18.